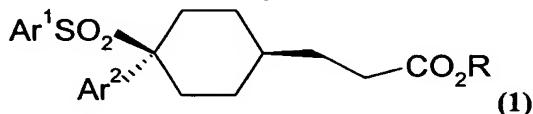


Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

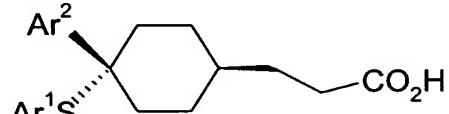
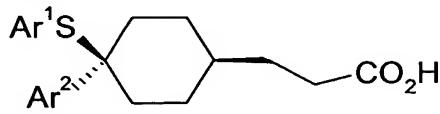
Claim 1 (Original) A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (1):



wherein R represents H or an alkali metal, Ar¹ represents 4-chlorophenyl and Ar² represents 2,5-difluorophenyl;

comprising the steps of:

(a) stirring a mixture of a *cis*-sulfide of formula (2) and a *trans*-sulfide of formula (3):



with 4-chlorobenzenethiol in an acidic medium in which said mixture of sulfides is partially soluble, causing preferential crystallisation of *cis*-sulfide of formula (2);

- (b) collecting the *cis*-sulfide of formula (2);
- (c) oxidising the *cis*-sulfide of formula (2) to the corresponding sulfone; and optionally
- (d) neutralising the product of step (c) with alkali.

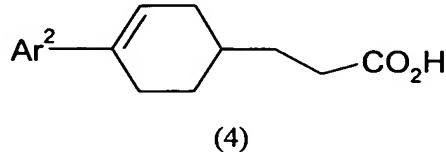
Claim 2(Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein said acidic medium comprises an acid selected from trifluoroacetic acid and C₁₋₄alkylsulfonic acids in which one or more of the carbon atoms may optionally be perfluorinated.

Claim 3(Original) The process according to claim 2 wherein the acid is trifluoroacetic acid, trifluoromethanesulfonic acid or methanesulfonic acid.

Claim 4(Original) A process according to claim 2 wherein said acidic medium additionally comprises a solvent selected from n-heptane, methylcyclohexane, trifluoroethanol, hexafluorobenzene, trifluorotoluene, hexafluoropropan-2-ol, acetonitrile and mixtures thereof.

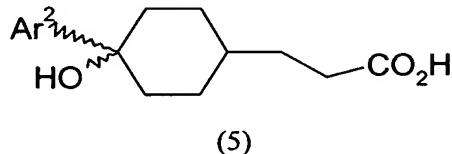
Claim 5(original) A process according to claim 1 wherein the acidic medium is methanesulfonic acid containing from about 5 to about 15 % water by volume.

Claim 6(Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein the mixture of *cis*-sulfide of formula (2) and *trans*-sulfide of formula (3) is generated by reaction of 4-chlorobzenethiol with an olefin of formula (4):



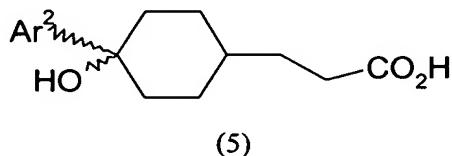
wherein Ar² represents 2,5-difluorophenyl,
said reaction being carried out in the acidic medium used in step (a) of the said process.

Claim 7(Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein the mixture of *cis*-sulfide of formula (2) and *trans*-sulfide of formula (3) is generated by reaction of 4-chlorobzenethiol with a carbinol of formula (5):



wherein Ar² represents 2,5-difluorophenyl,
said reaction being carried out in the presence of a Lewis acid, and the mixture of sulfides being isolated prior to carrying out step (a) of the said process.

Claim 8(Original) A process according to claim 1 wherein the mixture of *cis*-sulfide of formula (2) and *trans*-sulfide of formula (3) is generated by reaction of 4-chlorobzenethiol with a carbinol of formula (5):



wherein Ar² represents 2,5-difluorophenyl,
said reaction being carried out in the acidic medium used in step (a) of the said process.

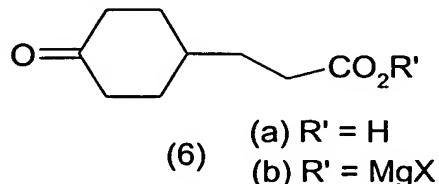
Claim 9(Currently Amended) A process according to claim 6 or claim 8 wherein the acidic medium comprises an acid and hexafluoropropan-2-ol together with a co-solvent selected from perfluorohexane and perfluorinated 2-butyltetrahydrofuran.

Claim 10 (Original) A process according to claim 9 wherein the acid is trifluoromethanesulfonic acid.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 6 or claim 8 wherein the acidic medium is methanesulfonic acid containing from about 5 to about 15 % water by volume.

Claim 12 (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 7 or claim 8 wherein the carbinol of formula (5) is prepared by:

(a) conversion of carboxylic acid (6a) to magnesium salt (6b):



(b) reaction of (6b) with $Ar^2\text{-}M'$; and

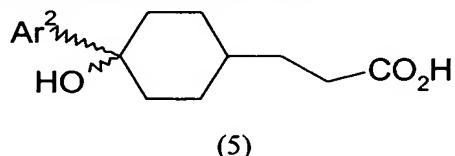
(c) treatment of the resulting product with acid;

wherein M' represents Li, MgX or CeX_2 ;

X represents Cl, Br or I; and

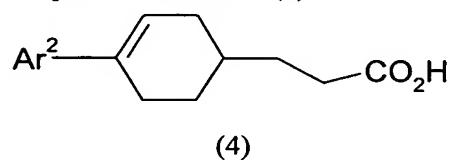
Ar^2 represents 2,5-difluorophenyl.

Claim 13 (Original) The compound of formula (5):



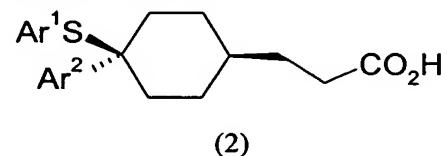
where Ar^2 is 2,5-difluorophenyl.

Claim 14 (Original) The compound of formula (4):



wherein Ar^2 is 2,5-difluorophenyl.

Claim 15 (Original) The compound of formula (2):



where Ar^1 is 4-chlorophenyl and Ar^2 is 2,5-difluorophenyl.